



Department of Justice

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FOUNTAIN COUNTY MAN SENTENCED TO MORE THAN SIX YEARS FOR TRAVELING TO OUT OF THE STATE TO MEET MINOR FOR SEX

Hogsett says prosecution is part of U.S. Attorney Office's efforts to protect Hoosier children

PRESS RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS – Joseph H. Hogsett, United States Attorney, announced that Erik S. Epperson, 22, Veedersburg, Indiana, was sentenced to 78 months in prison by U.S. District Judge William T. Lawrence following his guilty plea to traveling to meet a minor for sex. This case was the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in both Terre Haute San Diego, California.

“This office is committed to using the full force of federal law to protect our children from predators who use social networking sites,” Hogsett said. “I urge parents to commit themselves to remaining active and engaged with their children and their online social networking activities.”

In January 2011, Epperson traveled to meet a 14 year old girl in San Diego for sex. The girl's mother reported to authorities when she learned of the encounter in March. Epperson and the girl had first met on Facebook. In July 2011, a federal arrest warrant issued for Epperson from San Diego was served simultaneous to a search warrant for his computer.

Epperson's computer revealed other sexual relationships he had with approximately 10 other girls under age 18 in Indiana and Illinois, most of whom he had met on Facebook. Epperson's activities with all the girls occurred in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Gayle L. Helart, who prosecuted the case for the government, Judge Lawrence also imposed 8 years supervised release following Epperson's release from prison. During the period of supervised release, Epperson must not to have any

contact with any minors and register as a sex offender. Epperson was ordered to make restitution in the amount of \$2,030.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

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